

MUSIC · GRADES 2–4

Music Vocabulary

The words you need to talk about music

12 essential terms

1

Pitch

How HIGH or LOW a sound is.

Example: A bird's tweet (high) vs a drum (low).

2

Tempo

How FAST or SLOW the music goes.

Example: A march tempo, a lullaby tempo.

3

Dynamics

How LOUD or QUIET the music is.

Example: From whisper-quiet (pp) to as-loud-as-possible (ff).

4

Beat

The steady pulse you tap your foot to.

Example: Most pop songs have 4 beats per bar.

5

Rhythm

The pattern of long and short sounds.

Example: The same beat can have many rhythms.

6

Melody

The TUNE — the part you might hum or sing.

Example: Every song has a melody.



7

Harmony

Two or more notes played AT THE SAME TIME that sound good together.

Example: A choir in harmony.

8

Texture

How many layers of sound there are.

Example: One singer = thin texture. Full orchestra = thick texture.

9

Timbre

The unique 'colour' of a sound — what makes a violin sound different from a flute even on the same note.

Example: Pronounced 'TAM-ber'.

10

Chord

Three or more notes played together.

Example: Most songs are built from chords.

11

Key

The 'home' note a piece is built around. Major keys often sound bright; minor keys often sound sad.

Example: C major, A minor.

12

Phrase

A short musical 'sentence' — usually 4 or 8 bars.

Example: Like a line of a poem.

